2: Courlander 9-4 (1937-1938) 1960 8V3 H681 8V3

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kôl manyanl*
Oh, Dambalo Wido *é, kôl manyanl*
Oh, Ayido Wido *é, kôl manyanl*
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kôl manyanl*

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *cuvá* to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light, and the service was over.

Service for Erzuli Freda and St. Jacques Majeur

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded by four walls, adjoining the houmfor of Alexis Stephen on the west fringes of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the houmfor and dance court was a shrine to the "dead" loa Gédé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy of Gédé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire—black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and devotees of Stephen's houmfor. Everyone was watching with affection an old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to her and say something like: "Way, Manman, main ou pasé nwel!" (Oh, Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephen, made a casual entrance through the door of his adjoining houmfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. Soon, only the houmfor, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun service. For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the greatest of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

To go away and talk, eh!
Ogoun Balindjo
The eyes are, the mouth is closed, eh!*
Ogoun Balindjo
Don't you see they come to look at me?

Or again, the las Ogoun and Loko Astino are invoked to witness a person's misery, though in this song the cause is not explained:

Ogoun eh gi'ill mini!
Papa Ogoun ou wa gi'ill mini!
Gi'ill mini eh Lok' Astino gi'ill mini li yé! [Ex. 103]

Ogoun, eh, look at my misery!
Papa Ogoun, you will look at my misery!
Look at my misery, eh, Loko Astino, look at my misery here!

The impulse to criticism most often stems from personal injuries, but on occasion songs are used as a community affair to exert social pressures on an errant member of the neighborhood:

Fé' Jean-Pierre wa quitté bwé tafia!
Fé' Jean-Pierre ti manze yo tousel!

Brother Jean-Pierre, stop drinking tafia!†
Brother Jean-Pierre, the little children are naked!

Although discussions of neighbors' affairs tend to have this moral tone, a vast number of songs are pure gossip and are sung for their ribald or wry humor, as the case may be. In some the objects of ridicule are named; in others the allusions are indirect, so that only those who are familiar with the situation will know the people concerned. Open quarreling often provides amusement and substance for satire. The community can sense petulance, stupidity, and stubbornness through a confusion of charges and countercharges, and is quick to burlesque them. Thus there are public pressures against petty and needless disturbances. The following song refers to a dispute over ownership of an unnamed article.

Mais dis c'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogué
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogué
Mais dis c'est tafia grand monsieur Ogué
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogué
Mais dis n'ap chaché li Ogué
N'ap pouné li Ogué
Mais dis c'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogué
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogué [Ex. 106]

* That is to say, the eyes should see and the mouth should be closed.
† An alcoholic drink.